

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Grand Jury Charges California Man with "Nigerian Scam" Advance Fee Fraud Scheme**

Springfield, IL- Rodger A. Heaton, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, announced that a federal grand jury today charged Okechukwu Anumnu, of California, with four counts of wire fraud related to a scheme often known as a "Nigerian Scam."

The indictment alleges that from September 2002 through January 2003, Anumnu defrauded a Springfield resident of approximately \$26,500. According to the indictment, Anumnu sent e-mail messages to the victim advising that the victim's uncle had died in a 'ghastly motor accident' in Nigeria in April 2000. The e-mail messages stated that the victim had been nominated as "next of kin," and was entitled to \$14 million as an inheritance. Anumnu allegedly sent e-mail and facsimile transmissions to the victim which falsely stated that the victim had to pay "Currency Marginal Fluctuation Difference," to be paid the inheritance. At Anumnu's direction, the victim allegedly wired money from Springfield, Illinois to the defendant in Nigeria.

The charges are the result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Gregory M. Gilmore is prosecuting the case.

If convicted, the maximum statutory penalty for each offense of wire fraud is 30 years in prison and a fine of \$1,000,000.

Anumnu was arrested in California pursuant to a federal criminal complaint filed by the United States Attorney's Office for the Central District of Illinois in Springfield on May 24, 2006. He was scheduled to appear in federal court in the Southern District of California today, June 8, 2006, and will be transported by U.S. Marshals to the Central District of Illinois for future court appearances.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation; the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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